

S 3505  
A5284  
6  
921  
copy 1

AN MASTERSON

---

ETRICAL NARRATIVE

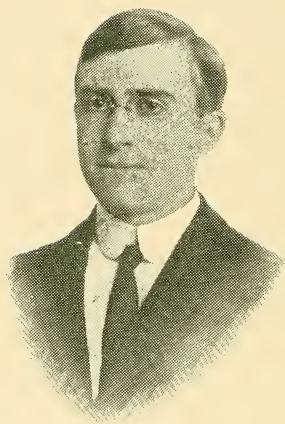
---

---

BY KENNETH CAMPBELL







JOHN MASTERSON;

OR,

Passion and The Priest

A METRICAL NARRATIVE

BY

KENNETH CAMPBELL



SAN DIEGO  
CAMPBELL PRESS  
807 8<sup>TH</sup> ST.

PS 3505  
.A5284 J6  
1921

COPYRIGHTED, 1921,  
BY JOHN P. CAMPBELL, PUBLISHER,  
SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA

OCT 17 1921

© Cl. A624818

201

DEDICATION  
—  
TO MY MOTHER

## FOREWORD

Since Time began, one of man's most heart-bleeding, sternest wars has been the conflict between the love instinct, the mating of the sexes, and the interference of parental and other outside adjustment; between the laws of convention and rebellious native instincts. John Masterson was a victim of both, and it is his soul struggle in this world-old strife that I have sought to portray in terms of emotion.

THE AUTHOR.

*Sacramento, California.*



## I.

LA JOLLA—1913

MAY

Forgetfulness, ah that is more  
Than Memory; the Gone Before,  
The Lost to lose—that were a power  
To gild with bliss the bleakest hour.—  
In work I cannot sink the past:  
The dreams of Night must lower at last.  
I sleep, but day for me begins  
And preying Thought, vampirish, wins!—

Aileen! A name that lives like myrrh  
In Urns of Memory; I may not slur  
My lady lost, of gentle will;  
Too strange her love—I love her still!  
Her beauty is my nocturne's wraith!  
I fight, I fight, to hold my faith:  
For if I lose that, I am lost,  
A cynic soul, in self engrossed.—

I sit within the gloomed embrasure  
Of the cliff; the surf's erasure  
Blots out each message on the sand  
Below, with paced recurrence bland.  
The Moon hath laid her Rug of Flame  
Across the Sea; 'twas so she came  
Into my life, too soon away,  
In Beauty as Dian astray.

Her father with his millions heaped  
Where weaklings at his bidding leaped,  
With domination overbore  
My landless love—to me his door

Was locked with triple links of steel;  
His lackeys' arrogance I feel  
Unto this night. My scorned dismissal  
Was followed by Aileen's epistle:

" 'Tis best we never meet again;  
I fight my father's will in vain."—

This ring that binds my smallest finger  
She sent; our first embraces linger  
In visions when my day is done,  
But she, my love, my life, is gone!

## II.

### JUNE

#### I.

A green cove all a pulsing blur  
Of lightless sound by night,  
Save when the lunar breezes stir  
From depths of soundless light,  
By day a blaze of beryl and of blue;  
The sounding surf, the fifing mew.

#### 2.

The waves, the breezes, sing "Aileen"  
To one who can't forget;  
The crinkling swells in fitful sheen  
Are pens that write it yet.  
To me, to me they spell "A-i-l-e-e-n,"  
My first, my last, my joy, my teen!

#### 3.

The bathers lance the bellowing foam  
With spear-point hands, or lie  
In sands, or idly cliffward roam,  
Where spume-tossed opals fly  
And shatter to a futile spray  
As broke a dream of mine one day.

## 4.

One of the gay and one apart  
Idly I plied the sand,  
Which shifted as a woman's heart,  
I thought, and with my hand  
Destroyed the fabrics that I wrought—  
When far-flung fear seaward I caught.

## 5.

A woman's agony can pierce  
The sentient ear of man  
And nerve him with a spirit fierce  
As moved the primal clan  
To meet the monsters of the cave—  
Responding, swift I fought the wave.

## 6.

It seemed the rigor of my soul  
Resolved in lenient joy;  
'Twas not I sought the hero's role,  
That egoist's alloy  
Of selfish aim and Gascon pride:  
'Twas that I hungered to be tried.

## 7.

My hands locked strands of gold-wet hair;  
The face was pallid under;  
And lo! There lay that Aileen there!  
Again must dull Fate blunder?  
The weird three sisters mix the cards  
And oddly heap the human shards?

## 8.

I swam with my lax love ashore,  
The clamor of the throng  
Unheard, and to the lee I bore  
Her from the wild surf-song  
Below a rock; her eyelids stirred:  
"Aileen!" I cried—that fateful word!

## 9.

And ere the prattling gossips came,

She smiled and sighed with me:  
Precluded passion leaped to flame—  
And only I was free!—  
“ . . . . . beloved,” was all she said,  
Ere memory again had fled.

## 10.

They bore her to the bungalow,  
Her sumptuous Summer eyrie;  
And That has intervened, I know,  
Will make my lot less dreary:  
These barriers of the social laws  
Are reared to give the timid pause.

## II.

For she is mated with a pang  
Encarnalized, a thorn,  
That pierces as the serpent's fang;  
Where love lives not, the scorn  
Of her pure mind for such as he  
Who purchased her, turns inwardly.

## 12.

She scorns herself as one of those  
Nomads of the street,  
Who never bask in love's repose,  
Nor learn its duties sweet—  
Incarnate sacrifice to pride,  
The Vestal flame within her died.

## 13.

Convention ever stones to death  
The unsafeguarded Phryne:  
But wedded goods is spared foul breath—  
As though the guilt were tiny  
That welds two lives where love is not  
And one remembers—unforgot!

## 14.

What barrier should there be to love  
Such as binds her to me?

Mine ark is beached; I've launched a dove  
To find a nascent tree,  
Then bring to me the herald twig;  
The world is small; the heart is big!

## III.

## JULY

## 1.

I am martial today in my delight,  
For the brimming is mine without measure;  
The chill shadows are fled in a night;  
All the day is but votive to pleasure;  
And I'll wander the canyon's cool maze  
Through the manifold beauteous hours,  
Where the crimson poinsettias blaze.  
Oh for me the militant flowers!

## 2.

March, march, march, with your sword, whitest  
soldiers  
Of the chaparral, parading the slope;  
Spanish bayonets, how firmly you hold yours;  
White, white, forever my hope!  
And ever I know that the Summer  
Will die in your withering arms;  
Today you are routing the mummer,  
And the scyther is hid with his harms,

## 3.

While the woodpecker hammers his drum;  
Vitality, action, delight,  
Virility, fervor now come,  
In spirit until the rich night:  
For my fairest is stealing to meet me  
In a dell by a musical stream;  
She is coming to thank and entreat me  
To go, to forgive and—to dream!

## IV.

Perplexities assail the finite thought  
Of man; he has been born to doubt.  
When fervor passes and the morning calm  
And drab has sunk from night's jet store,  
How slowly click the cams of introspection,  
Remorseless as the mill stones of the gods,  
Till each indissoluble deed is tossed  
Aside by force that grinds in vain,  
To crush it for the mind's digestion . . . . . I  
To-day am teeming with the vain employment.  
What wrecks of wild convention are we all!  
Wild as the frigid, molar Arctic Waste!  
Tradition racks the woman's blinded feet  
And warps the thought of superstitious man.  
But in a moment's wild rebellion, all  
Restrictions of the Cheops-mummy past  
Are disentangled: vividly the Now.  
The instant moment's fiery passion burns  
Athwart the bandages that calm discretion  
All piously enwrapped about the soul,  
And wildly rejuvescent, stifled flames  
Consume all usage—gone Religion's ban,  
Lost fear of pointing fingers and forgot  
Is Conscience, spirit monitor and law,  
That ebbs before the vital sun of Love!

. . . . . She came as Dian from the splendor trod  
The flower-singing way unto her shepherd,  
Mad sweetly sung of Keats, Endymion.  
The silken filminess of her green gown,  
Ethereal, was intermingled in  
The moon-glazed background of the glade,  
Where carpeting eyes of the ice-plant wept  
For her glad beauty. I may not list



As in a catalogue the things she said—  
Sweet volubilities of past, dear days,  
And praise and gratitude for my small deed  
Of rescue—ever holding well aloof  
From perilous allusion to her state  
Of marriage with the wealthy lecher whom  
She loathed; and vaguest tints athwart her face  
And glints within her eyes, revealed the fears  
And sorrows felt, when pensive silence fell.  
But time so fled before our happiness  
By contrast with our sorrow trebly sweet—  
Thus so because we sensed it to be transient  
From the Sibyl voices, psychic, of the soul—  
That the round moon had plumbed her arc of sad  
And ebon sky and overhung the canyon scarp  
In melancholy, luminous farewell,  
Ere half the banal sweets of speech were tasted,  
That lacked the pith but had the sound of meaning.  
It was that which she did not say that spake  
The loudest, thus: "I love you," though no nun  
Ere kept more strictly all proprieties  
Until—ah God—there fell a drench of sound  
Through all that mystic mountain majesty,  
Where, maddened by the soul of Sappho, sang  
A morbid mocking bird whose aching throat  
Seemed bursting to empress the passion pent  
Within his frenzy rapt, high-soaring soul.

\* \* \* \*

And weeping, though a willing "wronged Lucrece,"  
She sent me from her beauteous side, to meet—  
Where? When?—We twain by Nature's in-  
    stinct tied,  
By man-made error kept apart as long  
As her forbidding faith ententacled  
Her heart with duteous fear. . . . .

## V.

## SACRAMENTO—TWO YEARS LATER

## JANUARY

## 1.

Human life should not be known in years,  
But in terms of feeling; smiles and tears,  
Thoughts, dreams, joy, despair, love, hate, hopes  
and fears.

## 2.

Our emotions are the shifting tones  
Of the song of Time, and they are stones  
Whose suppression hearing never owns.

## 3.

Acts are but the progeny of these,  
Are the many infants on the knees  
Of the gods, whose whims their puppets please.

## 4.

Phases of my groping life's career  
Through the bitter, sweet, the lush, the sere.  
Flow in numbers, as emotions veer.

## 5.

Calm, majestic, through the rifted brake,  
From the dome I see the river take  
Turbidly its way, a moving lake.

## 6.

So my life these months has gloomed and gone  
Down a river never sunned upon,  
As the hidden Alph, earth under, drawn!



## VI. JUNE

### 1.

Yet now the elms mirror a greener shade,  
Whose interlacing limbs, a cool arcade,  
In Summer's torrid waste, adown the street  
Have tented for toil a vocal promenade,  
Orchestral with the lilt of blithesome birds,  
Whose operas lose not for lack of words.

### 2.

Hydrangias weave in winds with fresher hope  
On every shaded lawn, or sunny slope;  
The daisies and the dahlias brighter greet;  
The tendrils of the ivy peakward grope  
With more exalted striving to mine eyes,  
To-day made all alert from quaint surprise.

### 3.

A new strangeness—there came to me a line,  
From Aileen, pithy, sad, and yet divine,  
The first from her in all these days  
Restrained and sorrowful—the child is mine;  
With Nature's true design, delineation  
Depicts distinct to her too fond creation.

### 4.

It cannot be exuberance I feel,  
But that which comes at night to those who kneel;  
A stern joy, deeply sacred feeling sways;  
Perhaps such as to martyrs ere the wheel  
Revolved, which menaced them with hoarded  
pain,  
Designed by tyrant, zealously insane.

### 5.

This life of my life is to me denied  
By canons of propriety and pride;  
Avowal of paternity would be a sin,

A crime unto the innocent, beside  
 Which, sacrifice of native yearnings wild,  
 Is duty to the mother and the child.

6.

The world has no suspicion, wrote Aileen,  
 Though nuances of such she late had seen,  
 Mere flickers of a puzzled doubt within  
 Her husband's stolid heart, disturb his mien—  
 No tender traits revealed parental bliss,  
 No baby slang, no proudly loving kiss.

## VII.

### PATERNAL LOVE

1.

Dear little baby of mine,  
 Whence came thy Cupid's bow coral?  
 Who could have painted thine eyen  
 With the blue of the deepest dyes floral?  
 Oh, I know, I know! 'Twas thy mother  
 And the Spirit of Love, and none other!

2.

Who could have rapt from the rose  
 Her delicate pink for thy cheeks,  
 And the stainless delight of the snows  
 From Sierra's inviolate peaks?  
 It is plain, it is plain! 'Twas thy mother  
 And the Spirit of Love, and none other!

3.

Whence, pretty fairy, thy smile,  
 The bitterest wight to disarm?  
 And thy gurglings that evil beguile  
 To become thy warder from harm?  
 My heart tells, my heart tells! 'Twas thy  
 mother  
 And the Spirit of Love, and none other.

VIII.  
THE RIVER  
JULY

## 1.

The steamer swings into the morning mist,  
Now rising o'er the river;  
The drawbridge strains its ponderous bulk atwist;  
There is a constant quiver,  
A regulated cadence fore and aft,  
The beating of the heart within the craft.

## 2.

The pilot steers a serpentine course  
From bank to bank and center,  
Familiar with the channel from its source  
To where the salt-tides enter.—  
And I am swept along o'er unknown seas,  
My only log-book one of memories.

## 3.

Aileen is on the boat and by my side,  
And with her tiny Helen;  
From whom as many walls and gulfs divide  
As if I were a felon.  
She had been welcomed by a valley friend  
And to her "master's" side her ways now tend

## 4.

The meeting is not chance, but prearranged  
And lasts but for the journey;  
Her "Sultan's" love is now somewhat estranged,  
And though he would be stern, he  
Succeeds in being only brutal, till  
He rouses all the woman of her will.

## 5.

I quarrel not with fervor, faith and creed,  
The trusses of religion,

For millions find they fill a yearning need  
To rest a hopeful bridge on  
Into the Future and its hidden ways,  
Where mortal nights become immortal days.

## 6.

The day on which this in my diary goes  
Finds me a firm agnostic,  
An open mind that only one thing knows:  
That Fate to him is caustic,  
And that he would not lay the guilt on God,  
But puppets, who, as pulls convention, nod.

## 7.

But Aileen is of that devoted Faith  
Through which the bond of marriage  
Forever knits, until the husband's death  
Shall terminate miscarriage  
Of that most well intended, futile plan  
Which puts a better mating 'neath the ban

## 8.

HER sin was in her yield—but *cui bono*?  
The past is passed forever;  
She shall not fill the fate of Desdemona  
To his Othello—never!  
Of this she gravely spoke, and of her fears,  
So palely brave, repressing natural tears.

## 9.

And though my heart was desolate, bereft  
Of all that makes life matter,  
And only lees of bitter rue were left,  
I could not think to shatter  
The decalogue her church prescribed for her;  
Agnostic, yet HER Faith I must not stir.

## 10.

"He dreads the scandal of divorce in selfish pride,"  
She said, "not for my feeling.  
He fears the gossip tongues that would deride,  
The hidden blot revealing,  
For he is one who bears an ancient name  
That must not be besmirched by public shame.

## 11.

"But many savage slights he heaps on me  
Within our life domestic.  
And oh that I again were free!"  
The day marched on, majestic.  
The willows and the cottonwoods retreated  
Along the banks, as warriors defeated.

## 12.

Night rode down day upon a vaulting gale,  
Tanged with the salt of ocean;  
The genius breath of tragedy; the pale  
Dusk sipped its potion  
Of red wine from the beaker of the sun;  
Revived, the stars peeped, timid, one by one.

## 13.

The moon had hung a demi-disk of snow  
In icy far serenity,  
But now she gained a luminescent glow,  
A languid, lorn amenity,  
As if she tended Man to shepherd  
Him from the Hate that makes of Law a  
leopard.

## 14.

Ahead, the jagged bastions of Diabalo  
Seemed progress interposing,

Lit by the waning sunset's winy glow,  
An awful fortress closing;  
And then the river made a sudden turn,  
As motion learns fixed obstacles to spurn.

## 15.

The river finds a level in the sea,  
Through many tortured mazes,  
And this a symbol Sybillene to me;  
My life's entrammeled phases  
Will one day merge into the primal vast—  
Or will it into purest day have passed?

## 16.

I left Aileen and Helen safe aboard  
The steamer for the southland;  
Though all the man within me mad implored  
For love, with firm set mouth and  
Factitious calm I bade them both farewell.  
Aileen and I each knew a different hell.

## 17.

Hers was the Hades of the after-death,  
All blasting fire and fury,  
Save for the Purgatorial mercy-breath  
Of an Archangel jury.  
Mine was the Sheol of the thwarted now—  
Convention's Crown of Thorns, Love's Bleed  
ing Brow!

## 18.

One life frowned 'twixt a present Heav'n and me,  
I mused, in hopeless brooding;  
His icy interposing mastery,  
Law-sanctioned, right eluding,  
Of two souls' happiness were never fled,  
By Aileen's code—until he join the dead.



## IX.

## THE PRIMITIVE—ONE YEAR LATER.

## 1.

Can this be happiness here in the cool and shady glamour,  
Out of the harsh domain where on the racks of trade men clamor?  
The primitive simplicity of this benignant wood  
Uncrucifies from ivied bole, the passion of the rood.  
All graced about with messengers of healing peace and balm;  
Here life pervades with all the grandeur of Creation's calm.

## 2.

We've builded up a wattled cot, pavilioned by the boughs,  
Aeolian hung, of harps among the Dryads' peeping brows.  
It lies within a sheltered dell, a haven in the hills,  
Anear the everlasting swell and metronoming spills  
Of icy water o'er a granite plunge, a pine-high scarp;  
As veers, or rests the fitful wind, its clang is dull or sharp.

## 3.

Barbaric cruelties, refinements of the subtle art  
Of innuendo and the torture of a wincing heart,  
Aileen had borne until the buyer of her freedom stepped  
Beyond the limits of the ills of woman once outwept.  
Beyond the toleration that her Master's faith demanded,  
Unto such tortures, unescaped, as mankind makes red-handed.

## 4.

So that in wild revolt she left the hated nuptial bed;  
With Helen joined me, and despair into the forest led;  
Sequestered from the hounding of the Puritanic clan  
That on discovered sinnings only burns the scarlet ban;  
Reversing epic origin that Christians find their creed in,  
We've fled from worldly woes into this high-embowered Eden.

## X.

## PREMONITION

Sweet purple-hearted pimpernel,  
But vermeil as an ocean shell  
    Upon thy petal fringes,  
In thee perceptive instincts dwell;  
Detecting ere slow senses tell  
A coming storm, thy closing bell  
    With omen fancy tinges.

And as thy furling sepals so  
My dreams their prescient shuttings know,  
    As of impending crashes,  
When lancing rains the paths shall strew  
With ravished lilies' ruined snow:  
And lightnings torch the thunder throe  
    Till strife torrential dashes.

What wonder as the spirit sees  
Such vision, then to still hearts'-ease  
    It bends sad glances burning.  
Ah, sacred flow'ret, born to please,  
Thy innocence my fever frees,  
Thy healing nod, thy calm decrees,  
    Some shimmer of truth discerning!



## XI.

## THE PRIEST OF GATH

## I.

Within the wildest ways that men  
Have trod, far from the grave-like den  
Of coded tyranny, I roamed in chase  
Of deer and game; or scanned the face  
Of waters clear to diamond deeps,  
The icy pools, where, pining, sleeps,  
Narcissus of the marble heart,  
But mine the trout-enticer's part:  
Or mountain dainties far I sought  
For those within our lone love cot.

## 2.

Day unto day uttereth bliss  
And timeless love rains kiss on kiss.  
Aileen's pale beauty bloomed to joy  
Near perfect, which could never cloy,  
Forsooth we knew not when the day  
Should dawn, when snatched the cup away,  
And shivered the chime's cerulean tones,  
The righteous people and their stones  
Should burst into our Eden sweet  
And chain us to their penance seat.

## 3.

One eve I found a man whose moan  
Bespoke dire need; he'd fallen prone  
Upon an obscure mountain path;  
I learned him as the Priest of Gath,  
For he was one who'd sworn a vow  
To storm sin's citadel somehow.  
A pulmonary plaint impelled

Him to the solitude; he dwelled  
Within a grove of pine and fir  
Where constant healing spirits stir.

4.

We nursed him to a semblance of  
His former self; he sunned his love  
Upon us, warm and pure and bright,  
As calm as sacred thoughts at night—  
A holy man, if ever such  
Since Christ and His redeeming touch,  
And frequent strove he to recast  
My creedless shoon to his own last,  
And sorrowful, he heard our story,  
As one who grieves for glooming glory.

5.

"Father," I said, "if God were good,  
If such there were, he never would  
Have turned awry the hearts of men,  
Who merely sordid motives ken.  
He never would see women sold  
Upon the block for lecher's gold  
And merit crushed by greedy power,  
Nor slavery the poor man's dower,  
Nor Nations vampire Nations' blood  
And glut upon the reeking flood."

6.

"Yet love will conquer all the world,"  
He calmly said. "Too near us whirled  
Are vast events, to view the whole,  
Or we should see as good the goal  
Of this world in the universe;  
Faith will your darkling doubts disperse."  
And ever toiled he to recall  
Aileen to be religion's thrall  
So that uneasy fears I knew  
Lest she return to churchly rue.

## XI. THE PIT

### 1.

It was as if we two were slaves  
Of law and domineering knaves,  
By Circumstance set up as master  
Whom to defy egged on Disaster:  
As if a momentary respite  
Were ours from the pursuing despot,  
But ever nearer on the wind  
The baying of the chosen dinned.  
Why could we not be let alone?  
A damnable doctrine—the “must atone!”

### 2.

The Priest of Gath at length essayed  
Return unto his templed glade,  
There piously on saints to brood—  
An outdoor priest, but not a Druid  
To sacrifice young, weeping Love  
And moaning incense wreaths above  
The fell, red pyre; with good intent  
He came into our lives and sent  
Full many a pious prayer to “God”  
That “He” not smite us with his “rod.”

### 3.

There dawned a day when darkling clouds  
Lay on the peaks like Titan shrouds,  
The air oppressive with alarm,  
So still the thin Aeolian charm  
Of pine harmoniums fell mute  
And louder pulsed the foaming chute.  
That spilled eternal tides below,  
Fed by the sun’s transmuted snow.

I kissed Aileen's forebodings still  
And proved the mystery of the hill.

4.

A cloudy deep unplumbed of man,  
Cleft when the primal shuddering ran  
Athwart Creation's rocky spine,  
Breathed up miasmis as a mine,  
Down which the quaking fancy peers  
And Vulcan hammers faintly hears  
In vast imagining of fables  
Read nervously on midnight tables,  
Gaped on my left hand where the trail,  
But seldom used, led from the vale.

5.

The shaggy, mongrel, woody locks  
Of manzanita crowned rude rocks  
Of granite, like crushed heads Titanic,  
Unnecked by thunderbolts tyrannic,  
When raged rebellious ire of giant,  
Of Jupiter's regime defiant;  
And here and yon, hoary and bald,  
Old skinless skulls of rock appalled  
With sense of ruined past and future—  
Sardonic socket and jagged suture.

6.

Long, long ago some troglodyte,  
Upon the margin of the night,  
Deep down into this plumbless chasm  
Peering, blinked—when passed the thunder spasm  
Of grinding elements—and hurled the ape  
Tarpeian over, then agape,  
He gazed and hearkened for a sound,  
But merely awful silence round—  
As yet, to-day, into the void,  
War hurls her hosts to be destroyed.

7.

As spent with climbing, I rested here,

Unwelcome noises held my ear,  
Stumbling of one upon the trail  
Far round a rock that served to veil  
The climbing traveler, and me  
From him; I sensed hostility  
And hid behind an aged boulder,  
Colossal, yet so poised the shoulder  
Might with a heave hurl it down crashing,  
And over the brink send dashing and smashing.

8.

Aileen's husband, nemesis, came  
To stalk me for his private game!  
At last around the angle leaning,  
He paused below the overweening  
Fragment of the elder cliff.  
One motion of my arm—if—if—  
No witness to accuse—no—trace—  
The plunge of Lucifer in space—  
The drag upon two lives adrift—  
Ah how the sands Satanic shift!

9.

The power that withheld my hand  
Was more than I could understand.  
It seemed a stalemate of the will.  
The stone that spake: "Thou shalt not kill,"  
Was but a Moses sculptored line,  
Sinai-conceived, but not divine,  
The interdiction of all ages  
On wise, imperishable pages,  
The sheep's defense against the lion,  
Supernally ascribed to Zion.

10.

And still my spirit lost its blur,  
My rage its momentary spur;  
The Cain-red hand of hate eluded,  
Like some stern statue there I brooded,  
While he whose strands were interwoven

In tangled tapestry and cloven  
Where mine began, in Life's skeined scheme,  
Seemed some ghost figure in a dream,  
While Premonition, like a vulture,  
There hovered for some vile sepulture.

## 11.

More tangible, but terror-fraught,  
A sudden sight made polyglot  
A babel of the inner voices,  
From Fear to Hope—as Dawn rejoices,  
In consummated deeds of night,  
The man who's struggled fierce with Right  
And lost, but lavish Fate, his aid,  
Misfortune on his rival laid—  
So o'er me transient gloating swept  
At Death which on the other crept.

## 12.

It was a stalking mountain lion  
Whose stealth disturbed no foliage cion,  
Whose yellow eyes, abhorrent, burned,  
As they upon his prey were turned—  
A savage symbolized cinerary,  
Fuming all the hate my heart could carry.—  
Unmindful of his nemesis,  
(So obtuse Man's native premises)  
The hunter hunted idly rested,  
An easy spoil for an end detested.

## 13.

Again, what monitor, what hand,  
What minatory, stern command;  
What triumph of the Inner Spirit,  
What Power made me list and hear It,  
Unconceived; 'twas not my will  
Which reft the lion of his kill,  
Which bade me raise, and aim and fire,  
To balk the beast of his desire,



Mysterious, occult ends of Fate!  
Most senseless what I now narrate!

14.

For he whose life I had preserved.  
Yea twice a better will deserved,  
Perceiving me now half revealed  
And thinking not myself to shield,  
With face fear white and raw, red oath,  
"Assassin!" shrieked—and ere we both  
A nearing step could take, upraised  
His rifle, and searing, grazed  
The scoring bit of steel and lead,  
A harmless pain athwart my head.

15.

And ere the maniac again  
Might aim, perhaps and not in vain,  
I grappled with him on the brink  
Of space—the brain knows not to think  
In dreams, when, falling endlessly,  
The lifting nadir we can see.  
To strain for epithets is vain;  
I cannot conjure from my brain  
Meet words; he whirled into the chasm—  
It seemed a wild, dream-borne phantasm!

16.

And still no dream; his cap there lay  
Upon the weapon cast in the fray.  
In semi-stupor I hurled them wide  
Into the maw of the mountain side,  
Then shivering, hastened from the scene  
To sift the sequel with Aileen:  
Whether to meet the law half way  
Or saving silence to obey;  
And all the homeward path I heard  
That poor, last, vain accusing word.

17.

When yet afar, amazed, I saw

A fitful smoke, as of wet straw,  
And leaping madly through the brake,  
Down tangled slopes new trails to make,  
Vaulting pebbled, arid beds  
Of bygone brooks and tramping heads  
Of tender buds that interposed,  
I came to where the chapter closed.  
Our rough-hewn hut in ashes lay  
Gone, gone, save dregs of dead flames, gray!

## XII.

## FEVER.

## 1.

Falling, falling, endlessly falling,  
Like the flame of a shivered star:  
Calling, calling, soundlessly calling,  
As the dreams of a dreamer are:  
Out of Orion in the aeons past  
Fiery mist moths flew in the vast,  
Drawing a comet's car.

## 2.

Into the sun from out of Orion,  
The fire-moths are warming their wings;  
Pinions of melody, such as Amphion  
Wove on Aeolian strings;  
But as Icarian, waxen were they,  
Molten as snow in a premature May—  
The soul falls and falls as it sings.

## 3.

Can there be no end to the flaming?  
Can there be no floor to the fall?  
Fire into water, earth aiming,  
And over the craggy wall.  
Down, down, down in a fuming  
Quest of its rest resuming:  
Awaiting Creation's call.



## 4.

Fire and water are living  
And song is Creation's breath;  
Love burning, sorrow giving  
Its ashes the pit of Death.  
Real or unreal this dreaming?  
Seen or unseen this seeming?  
No mortal thing happiness hath!

## XIII.

## JUDGMENT.

## 1.

They've called me guilty; twelve men said  
The wrong of it lay on my head;  
The gallows bear perennially;  
No lovingkindness nurtures them;  
More lethal than the upas tree,  
Vile in root, branch, in bud and stem:  
And I shall bloom and fade thereon,  
For mercy from the world is gone.

## 2.

The fever left my brain next morn  
And as the leper all men scorn,  
Marked by the curse that blighted Job,  
But lacking hope of happy end,  
Upon my soul a sackcloth robe,  
In vain I fevered for a friend:  
The story told lacked all belief:  
Men look for murder in a thief.

## 3.

For love illicit is a theft,  
By laws transmitted from the west  
Of social fabric when the clan  
Decided on monogamy,  
And stocks and chains were for the man

Who lived in free misogamy.  
It is done well; it is done well;  
But loveless marriage is a hell.

4.

And still, no more than marriageless love,  
When free of fetters is the dove.

Aileen the victim was of BOTH;

On her fair head the double curse;

How beautiful the sanctioned troth!

Than love illegal, can aught be worse?

But love by gold is crucified!

Nailed on the cross, love drooped and died!

5.

My tale of self-defense was dust

Before the wind, or as the rust

That blinkards see on tarnished truth:

They made a martyr of the dead;

The living won no word of ruth;

"Hanging too good for him," they said.

And so to-morrow's morning sun

Will see the real murder done.

6.

I gaze upon thee, fading day,

Who soon resume the primal clay:

But musical the heart within,

For Aileen at the death-cell stood,

And oh, I seemed all purged of sin:

I felt the future would be good.

My baby took my praying kiss

And faith then came with flooding bliss!

7.

How I rejoice the ashes of

That hut held not the two I love!

Aileen's mad father set the fire

And with my loves departed:

And as Lot's wife looked on the pyre,

But spared, she gazed, though broken-hearted.

It was a strand within the plot:  
The husband's awful night was not.

8.

Farewell, broad earth with all I love;  
Farewell, hills, vales and peaks above;  
    Farewell, sweet flowers of the forest;  
    Farewell, bright songsters of the glen;  
    Farewell, thou sea, as foam thou pourest;  
    Farewell, farewell, all haunts of men;  
Farewell to all; in peace I leave;  
Farewell, farewell, twain hearts that grieve!

#### XIV. ON TAMALPAIS.

In Excelsis,  
    In dreams, I stood  
Exalted far above the Wood:  
Fir, bay, laurel, pine  
Below this rocky shrine,  
The flayed madrone,  
    As fairy shoots.  
There, poised alone  
    Upon the fruits  
Of Time's upheaval  
With Cain coeval,  
    I read the roots  
Of mysteries,  
The histories  
    Of souls and stars  
In all the graphic imagery of scars.

2.

The mist that robed  
    The sleeping sea  
The light englobed revealed to me.  
Blown o'er the minor hills—  
Illusion Thought distills—  
    Creation rolled

As if from chaos,  
Worlds manifold  
Of light, to ray us,  
Were spawned prolific  
In beatific  
Forms to dismay us.  
It was Creation  
And Revelation  
Of God to those  
Who visioned primal planetary throes.

3.

That drama vast  
Awoke within  
Feelings akin  
To Shelley's arching thought;  
Mine inner gropings sought  
For words; came none!  
Beyond expression!  
As tremors run  
In pent recession  
Along mute lyres  
Whose unthrummed wires  
Have ta'en possession  
Of inspired yearning  
From vast tones turning  
To slaves of waves  
All vibrant atoms, e'en to Heavens architraves!

## XV.

1.

So passed the glimmer of a midnight dream,  
As along the Summer seas the ghostly gleam  
Of some far falling meteorite lies  
For one flame-penciled moment, then dies:  
When up I started from waning sleep;

A palpitating fancy moved me deep:  
My warders were approaching with a priest,  
Ere faintly God's red stylus wrote the east.  
What hastened they? Why grudged me half my vision,  
To disincorporate me with elision  
Of moments priceless—ere the sempiternal  
And starry dial should blue to light diurnal,  
And I might taste a final kissing sun  
So niggardly admitted by the one  
Checked casement?

Now with careful, feline tread,  
The cautious footfalls hemmed my cell, and lo!  
I blinked, as weak-orbed mortals at the snow,  
For garishly a light was flung full on my face.  
"Father!" I cried. "You come with grace!"  
And then the massive bolts were shot amain,  
To grate and groan as though inflicted pain  
Spilled fear: I gazed and in my vision's path  
I read a miracle—the Priest of Gath!

## 2.

A modern Paul to open prison gates!  
By him to be sweet solaced, solving hates  
For a prospective gallows bourgeois! I held  
His kindly hand in silence and beheld  
Some subtle, oriflamming radiance,  
As if an aureoled Apostle did advance.  
"Good Father!" raven-wise I croaked at last,  
"Some marvelous illusion, or some vast,  
Deceptive wile of vainly hoping thought  
Writes glory in some message joy-enwrought  
Upon your face!" His eyes were moistly luminous,  
And ill reserved his feelings—human is  
Even the man whose duties clerical  
Preclude surrender to a mien hysterical.  
"Reprieved," he said in that bell-voice disease  
Could not deprive of all its charm to please.  
"A pardon very shortly must ensue.

The Governor has signed this boon for you.”  
And hereupon the Captain of the Guard  
With kindly speech confirmed . . . . This night bright starred  
For me: the cogs of Fate at last had turned,  
Reversing, for it seemed their victim spurned  
Had naught of further worth in lieu of moans—  
And hearts at last were living—not stones!

## 3.

Too tedious would it be the priestly words  
To recapitulate; of all the birds  
Most tiresome is the magpie, so that only  
The substance I impart. That tragic, lonely  
Encounter on the verge precipitous,  
The Priest of Gath had seen, far over us  
Ensconced within a certain beetling eyrie  
That overlooked a waste of rock as dreary  
As Dante's dusk Inferno, fastnesses  
Profound, mysterious, and vastnesses  
Of craggy, violet distance. He had sought  
To follow me, but native feelings wrought  
Upon his pulmonary weakness so  
That, crimson from his pallid lips the flow  
Ensued. He fell into a dreamless swoon,  
Reviving hours later when the moon,  
Serenely sheening pity, shone upon  
His suffering and lighted with a wan  
Effulgence all his falt'ring homeward path—  
And many days the Priest of Gath  
Alone fought off inexorable throes,  
But still preserved the courage Vision knows,  
Until his mustered strength permitted travel:  
His testimony saved without a cavil.



## XVI.

## ANOTHER YEAR PASSES

## 1.

The Priest of Gath is healed and I am ill,  
But not in faith of reclamation still  
Of ill-starred destiny: I moiled a maze  
Of disappointment many, many days  
Of twisting in an inefficient search,  
As one who sought a shrine rapt from a church.  
State's pardon came to wash my tablets clean  
And all my heart-beats pulsed into a pean  
Till clashed the muting discord of a lost Aileen!

## 2.

A prisoner within her father's castle kept;  
As many a feudal maiden once outwept  
Long days; what lie he must have told her!  
Forgive him? Yes. Restore the hopes that moulder?  
That were another matter. Believed me dead?  
Such is true solace . . . Late one night she fled.  
The age is new. But Wealth is tyrant still!  
As Mirabeau's own father's overweening will  
By cachet dungeoned him, his rebel fire to chill.

## 3.

Through all the marts of men I sought her,  
A Gabriel, in search of Benedict's lorn daughter.  
Evangeline? I hold mine no less pure  
In heart. To me the stain sole must inure.  
And so I dare reversed comparison.—  
Yet like to wasted soldiers in a garrison,  
Besieged and famished, daily promise dwindled  
And every new delusion that my fancy kindled  
Turned tawdry, as by Rumor's brass a dupe is swindled.

## 4.

Then fever came to burn my barriers down.  
Despairing furies stormed and took the town.

The Priest of Gath in lovingkindness came  
To balm with cooling hands the throbbing flame.  
The balsams of the forest, mountain air  
Had healed this sacrificing man of prayer,  
Whose thought had ever been of aiding others,  
Aspiring but amelioration of his brother's  
Trials with a love exalted as a mother's.

## 5.

Aileen, I faint, in my great love of thee!  
Bright visions vie, in gorgeous pageantry!  
I see thy beauteous face as in a mist!  
And lo! It bends upon me! I have kissed  
A luminous dissolving nothingness!  
Thus balefully doth Fancy soothe and bless  
And torture with its sweetest vanishment,  
Until the fiery love within the victim pent  
Hath burned his heart into an ash to find its vent!

## 6.

But still the ember glows and so it must  
Till love, its germ, with it is cold in dust.  
The priestly care has gradually restored  
My courage, nearly of its phials poured.  
"My son," he says. "Within a passing while  
I leave for Molochai, the leper isle.  
That is my destiny, the voice of God  
Commands me, humble as my Jesus trod,  
To whose most muted whisper must I, yielding, nod."

## 7.

To Molochai, the isle of living death!  
Where Time is but the pulsing of one breath!  
"Father," said I, "And might I thus atone  
For all the tares my selfishness has sown—"  
"No, no," he gently put the thought aside.  
"Your duty clear. It cannot be denied.  
It is to find the woman, make her wife  
And give the child a name; there is the end of strife;  
I've planned a compensating purpose for your life."



## XVII.

## COMPENSATION

## 1.

The glasses glitter 'neath the garish blaze;  
The dancers wend athwart the waltz's maze  
Within the polished place of tables clear,  
Where many sip the contemplative wine,  
Or, more plebeian, quaff the brimming beer,  
And weirdly syncopated music hear,  
Where Gaiety reigns on his urban throne,  
And each would hide and leave his canker care alone.

## 2.

The shifting moments see new revelers fed  
Adown the marble stair, to gay lights led;  
For San Francisco's night is second day;  
The artist and the artisan but learn  
Then how to make the "Western Paris" gay,  
When midnight censers in the cabaret,  
To Babylonian bursts of laughter burn,  
And ashen Care, intolerant, dies in the urn.

## 3.

I sit alone, a puzzled looker-on,  
A hopeful skeptic, perverse interest drawn,  
Sub-conscious stirrings in my restive mind,  
A premonition of events to fall,  
The strange, unbidden sense that seems to find  
In the Before from pangs long left Behind,  
A change of fortune, as a far soul's call  
In some wise penetrates the kindred spirit's wall.

## 4.

The dilettantes return unto their nooks  
With lavish color and more froward looks,  
To yield the floor to one who is to dance,  
Some new and daring, gracile coryphee—  
Some "La Petite Marie" from sprightly France,  
Who shall recall how swift the fads advance—  
A beauteous being from the wings I see,  
And startle with a cry: "Aileen!"—and not "Marie!"

## 5.

No dramatist fantastical devised  
A stranger scene than that we improvised,  
As open arms to open arms we met;  
She pale and momentarily overborne,  
As one who sees a ghost she can't forget,  
Whose heart believes, whose doubting brain not yet  
Is mistress of its power, passion torn,  
Rejoicing, though its habit long to mourn.

## 6.

And all impressions vaguely to a blur  
Were interfused, except the gift of her . .

The queries curious, the lip-curled leers,  
The hum of all the titillated crowd,  
The sympathy of better hearts avowed,  
And though we were the cynosure of sneers,  
No carmine shame we knew, for these were sacred tears.

## 7.

Remote, unreal, was the sweep of lights  
And all confusion of a city's nights  
As swiftly, soon for her retreat we sped,  
And in the afterglow of sudden joy  
She spoke of how she learned to deem me dead,  
How hope and almost reason from her fled,  
When, prisoned, by her father she was told  
That one was duly dead for whom no knell was knolled

## 8.

Abhorrent was the thought of life until  
A baby's hands implored a sterner will;  
And motived by a wild desire to flee

Her hateful home and him who caused the wreck,  
By stratagem she and the child were free,  
Supposing quicklime were the end of me,  
She followed fortune's ever casual beck,  
Became the ballet, as a rose without a fleck.

## 9.

Next morning were we wedded by our priest:  
The sun had hymned his pean from the east;  
The gloried winds had blown a symphony,

And roses, roses, Beauty's incense shed:  
But, joy of all! Our baby lisped to me  
That sacred, loving word of ecstasy,  
That gladdens gloom unto the heart that bled;  
The Priest of Gath his noble benediction shed.

## 10.

Next morning sailed he for his dutied Gath,  
For Molochai to tread the martyr's path,  
To yield his life unto his fellow man;

His Christ-like spirit seemed an aureole  
About his silvered brow; since Time began  
No greater abnegation led the van;  
One touched his robe as lepers did the stole,  
The sacred white of Jesus' faith that made them whole.

## 11.

He'd given me an island in the sea  
Of Oceania, his by legacy,

A coral-coasted, breaker-beaten strand,

With harbor crescented for commerce calm—  
One-half the copra for his lepers planned,  
The other mine, the yield of pearl and palm—  
Aileen a farewell wept; I pressed his hand  
And boundless love he sped from eyes, sky blue and bland!

## 12.

And so we bade The Priest of Gath Farewell:  
The steamer bore him to the vales where dwell  
They who have quaffed disciples' blood and bread  
Of Christ's own deathless body theirs,  
One with their tissue, yea, for whom the prayers  
Of saints beyond the Sinaied temple pled!—  
The Priest of Gath as one a nimbus wears  
And knows it not—a Grail-keeper unawares!









LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 018 602 515 5

